

We Claim:

1. An acidified, shelf stable, non-fermented, dairy-based food product comprising an acidifying agent, wherein the food product does not possess a substantially harsh flavor.
2. The food product of Claim 1, wherein the food product does not possess a lumpy texture.
3. The food product of Claim 1, comprising a ready-to-eat food product.
4. The food product of Claim 1, wherein the food product is rendered shelf stable without the use of high heat.
5. The food product of Claim 1, wherein the food product contains an acidulant with a pH of less than about 4.
6. The food product of Claim 5, wherein the food product contains an acidulant with a pH of between about 0.1 to 1.5.
7. The food product of Claim 6, wherein the food product contains an acidulant with a pH of between about 0.1-0.22.

8. The food product of Claim 1, wherein the food product comprises a cheese sauce.

9. The food product of Claim 1, wherein the food product is formed using an acidifying agent comprising a combination of acids.

10. The food product of Claim 1, wherein the acidifying agent comprises acidic calcium sulfate.

11. The food product of Claim 1, wherein the acidifying agent comprises sodium acid sulfate.

12. The food product of Claim 1, wherein the acidifying agent comprises a combination of acetic and lactic acids.

13. The food product of Claim 1, wherein the food product utilizes a gum masking textural defects in the food product.

14. The food product of Claim 13, wherein the gum comprises a cellulose gum.

15. The food product of Claim 13, wherein the gum comprises a

combination of cellulose and guar.

16. The food product of Claim 1, wherein the food product utilizes a gum to mask texture defects caused by casein precipitation.

17. The cheese sauce of Claim 8, comprising between about 2-6% natural cheese.

18. The food product of Claim 1, wherein the food product comprises about or less than about 2% salt.

19. A non-fermented, dairy-based cheese sauce acidified not having an associated substantially harsh flavor or substantially lumpy texture, and rendered shelf stable without the use of high heat.

20. A process for forming a non-fermented, shelf-stable, dairy-based, acidified food product, comprising the steps of:

combining various ingredients including water and natural cheese to form a mixture; and

introducing hydrated starch, steam and an acidulant to the mixture to form the acidified food product.

21. The process of Claim 20, wherein the food product is derived by mixing natural cheese in a weight range of about 2-6% and water in a weight range of about 60-75%.

22. The process of Claim 20, further comprising the step of adding a gum to the mixture, the gum masking textural defects caused by casein precipitation.

23. The process of Claim 20, wherein the food product comprises a food sauce.

24. The process of Claim 20, further comprising the step of pasteurizing the acidified food product.